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TO: Delegate Kumar P. Barve, Chair
Delegate Dana Stein, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus (MLLC)

DATE: February 2, 2021

RE: HB515 Real Property – Candidates – Access to Apartment Buildings

The MLLC supports HB515 Real Property – Candidates – Access to Apartment Buildings.

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB515.

Due to a long history of redlining and severe racial disparities in housing programs that prevent people of color from home ownership, the United States suffers a racial divide between families who rent and families who own their homes. A majority of Black and Latino residents rent rather than own their homes compared to white residents. Specifically, Latino families are [twice as likely](#) to rent, compared to white families. In 2017, [52.8% of Latinos](#) lived in rental units, whereas 30.5% of whites rented their homes. These housing inequalities can impact the democratic process.

A Yale University [study](#) reported that in person contact by a political candidate or volunteer is an effective way to inform potential voters and to motivate non-habitual voters to vote, especially in local elections. These canvassing methods are also critical for get-the-vote-out campaigns to register eligible voters which often leads to higher voter turnout rates. When a candidate or volunteer cannot contact voters because of dwelling unit restrictions it hinders our communities from fully exercising their right to vote and gaining useful election knowledge.

HB515 prohibits a person from preventing a political candidate from accessing apartment buildings, while requiring owners and managers to make multiple buildings available for entry by a candidate. Property owners can also require a candidate to schedule an appointment to canvass, which would facilitate communication between the two about time availability. This legislation would ensure that voters who live in a rental apartment are not denied the opportunity to engage in the democratic process because of actions by their landlord to exclude political candidates.

The MLLC supports this bill and urges a favorable report on HB515.